

This past week of the Congressional District Work Period has given me a lot of great opportunities to hear thoughts from folks at home, and to catch up with those of you who just can't make it to Washington. Specifically, I've met with my Education Advisory Council, several Rotary Clubs, as well as small businesses around the First District.

First, as a spouse of a public school teacher, education is extremely important to me. I have setup three Education Advisory Councils throughout the First District, the first of their kind, to meet with me and my staff on issues affecting our children's educational needs. These Councils include over 150 participants from all viewpoints of the issue including: teachers, PTA's, school superintendents, special needs educators, and home school representatives. With the No Child Left behind Act coming up for reauthorization it's vital that I hear from those who are directly affected on what steps are needed to either reform the program or come up with new ways to improve our education system. Also, we have discussed the Standards of Learning, funding and access to higher education, and what effects the recently enacted stimulus legislation will have on schools in your community.

Next, my visits with local Rotary Clubs have given me some great thoughts to bring back to Washington. If you're not familiar with Rotary and its work, it is the world's first service club organization and with more than 1.2 million members who volunteer their time and talent to further their communities. Overwhelmingly, I have heard the echo of concern over the current rate of spending, and what that bodes for our future fiscal health. Let me just say that I share these concerns and will continue to be a voice in Congress for common-sense solutions to the problems faced by our nation and control over our nation's checkbook. It is high time that those in our government learn that money is not a constant stream of water, and our spending habits today could lead to inflation and increased taxes tomorrow.

Lastly, I always enjoy meeting with small businesses and witnessing the American dream come to fruition. These creators of 70% of our nation's new jobs every year are a fundamental and important piece of our economy. Many of these small businesses have shared their frustration at how big corporations have received bailouts, while they are carrying the load of trying to obtain the credit they need to operate. Small businesses, while "small"; should serve as a model for these larger businesses; in hard times you have to make smart decisions, and those will ensure your continued success down the road.

Please know that every comment and every idea from the district makes its way back to Washington with me. Your thoughts are what enable me to do my job to the best of my ability,

as I continue to highlight your concerns from the Commonwealth. I look forward to returning to Washington next week and bringing those ideas to Congress.

Congressman Rob Wittman represents the First District of Virginia. He was elected to his first full term in November 2008 and serves on the Natural Resources Committee and the Armed Services Committee where he is the Ranking Member of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee.